

# Assessment Report

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### Part A: Commentary

A range of classical texts, art works, and classical historical figures are being used by candidates to successfully respond to the examination across the three Achievement Standards, respectively.

Though candidates were well prepared for the 2021 examination, future candidates would benefit from learning how to write structured responses. Candidates who earned high Merit and Excellence typically possess writing skills that enabled them to organise their knowledge in response to the chosen question in a focused and convincing manner. While there is no prescribed framework beyond 'using paragraphs' as to how candidates should answer, understanding ways to structure a response (for example, writing paragraphs that approach the two parts of a question separately, or writing paragraphs that approach the two parts of a question in an integrated manner, etc.) could enable candidates to present their understanding with more clarity and in a more authoritative way that could enable them to demonstrate in-depth or perceptive understanding.

Additionally, the planning page/space provided is a useful tool for candidates to prepare their response. While not a requirement, candidates who plan are more



likely to grapple with and interpret the chosen question in relation to what they know and think. Through planning, candidates are more likely to write responses that are focused on answering the chosen question and less likely to write irrelevant information. This improves the quality of their response.

Lengthy introductions are unnecessary and should be avoided. Often pre-prepared introductions are used by candidates that contain mostly irrelevant information. An introduction, if used, should be brief and focused on what the response is about and how the response will address the question. Moreover, lengthy responses in general should be avoided. Candidates who wrote an excessive amount tended to provide irrelevant information or hit the same criteria repeatedly. The quality of the response is more important than the quantity.

The three Achievement Standards that comprise this examination require candidates to situate their knowledge in the classical world. Candidates who earned higher levels of achievement have sound historical knowledge supported by relevant primary evidence that has enabled them to explain their response to a question within, and in reference to, the relevant context(s) of the classical world. This enabled these candidates to show a deeper understanding of the ideas and values communicated through classical texts, the significance of classical art, or the importance of a classical historical figure. Candidates should avoid imposing modern value judgements on ancient contexts, as this typically results in candidates making generalisations and assumptions that are superficial and inaccurately define the complex nature of the classical world.

Candidates are encouraged to read all questions carefully before making their choice about which one to answer. Some candidates could have earned higher grades if they had selected a question that was better suited to their knowledge.

## Part B: Report on standards

### 91021: Demonstrate understanding of ideas and values of the classical world

#### **Examinations**

The examination required candidates to select and write paragraphs in response to one of four questions. To answer a question in this examination, candidates were expected to understand a classical literary text regarding the following assessment specifications:

- heroism
- themes
- social and cultural traditions

The examination required candidates to apply their understanding of a classical literary text to a chosen question to demonstrate understanding of ideas and values of the classical world. A perceptive response focused on describing relevant and detailed evidence from a classical text and explaining how this evidence, when situated in the ancient context, revealed ideas and/or values of the classical world in relation to the question selected.

### **Observations**

Candidates who situated their responses in the ancient context wrote better quality answers.

Candidates should avoid making comparisons to modern society's beliefs and values, as this typically results in oversimplistic and general evaluations of important societal aspects. For example, candidates are discussing gender in a simple manner – 'all women had to stay inside', 'women only cooked and cleaned', 'women were not important in classical society'.

A more holistic and perceptive approach as to how society was structured and what traits were desirable or valued and explaining why would have benefited many candidates' answers and was necessary for higher grades of achievement.

Similarly, comments about why characters make choices or behave in a certain way are often simplistic. For example, 'the laws of the gods were important and must be followed'. There are often few comments that unpack why classical societies held strong religious beliefs.

Additionally, many candidates discussed social conventions as being important to the gods but did not discuss why they were also important to society. For example, 'xenia was important because Zeus oversees xenia' without explaining why xenia was important to the people of classical society. Examples of why xenia was important in the classical world could be related to travel, the establishing or continuity of relationships between people, and the development of a person's reputation, etc.

While it is pleasing to see candidates showing an awareness of wider cultural contexts, many included these details without consideration for the chosen question.

Many candidates are writing responses where they discuss themes in the text that are not relevant or accurate with regards to ideas and values of ancient Greek and Roman society. For example, claiming that Telemachus' use of xenia shows the theme of 'domestic heroism', and that Homer is suggesting 'by showing xenia anyone can be a hero'. A deeper understanding of classical society / ancient context could further support candidates towards identifying and discussing relevant and accurate ideas and values of the classical world as communicated through classical texts.

A range of classical texts were used successfully in this examination, including Greek tragedies, such as, 'Oedipus the King', and 'Antigone' and epic poems, such as, 'The Iliad', 'The Odyssey', and 'The Aeneid'.

### Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- used a two-part essay structure and focused on describing text details, writing less on the ideas and values present
- included a large amount of unnecessary plot details that were mostly irrelevant to the question selected
- described details of the text generally, using very few specific phrases or quotes
- made very general comments about ideas and values without expanding for example, 'burial is important to the gods'
- wrote about complex ideas and values in a simplistic way
- did not respond to all parts of the chosen question
- compared ideas and values to modern day society, therefore focused less on how their substantiating evidence reflected ideas and values of classical society.

Candidates whose work was assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- wrote plot summaries
- did not connect plot details to ideas and values of classical society
- did not connect text details to the question
- referenced either film versions or back stories, not the texts themselves

- wrote explanations about ideas and values that were overly simplistic or inaccurate.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- demonstrated connections between text details and ideas and values of classical society clearly
- used specific text references as examples (for example, specific phrases or quotes) to support their comments
- made simplistic evaluations of complex social ideas and/or values (for example, 'all men cared about was kleos and honour')
- referenced the importance of text aspects to the gods but neglected to explore the benefits to classical society and vice versa
- compared ideas and values to modern day society, therefore focused less on how their substantiating evidence reflected ideas and values of classical society
- made some connection to social and political events and/or ideas impacting the audience of the text.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- engaged with the text and appreciated how it developed/reflected ideas and values in classical society clearly
- integrated text details with explanations of how the details demonstrated ideas and values
- demonstrated understanding of social or political issues of the society that the text was created for and explored how the text reflected these in a thorough and convincing manner
- applied relevant discussion of a wider cultural context to their chosen question
- demonstrated a thorough understanding of classical society and explained how key ideas and values were important to the society.

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91022: Demonstrate understanding of the significance of features of work(s) of art in the classical world

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## Examinations

The examination required candidates to select and write paragraphs, which could be supported by diagrams and/or annotated sketches, in response to one of four questions. To answer a question in this examination, candidates were expected to have an understanding of the features of art works identified in [Explanatory Note 2 of the standard](#). The questions required candidates to apply their understanding of features of a classical artwork or building to demonstrate understanding of their significance. A perceptive response to a question focused on providing relevant and detailed evidence about features of a classical artwork or building and explaining how these features, when situated in the ancient context, were significant in relation to answering the chosen question.

## Observations

This Achievement Standard is about a candidate's knowledge of a classical artwork, so candidates need to focus on the artwork and write about the artwork. Candidates who focused on the historical / political / social / mythological context and failed to link their general knowledge to the artwork did not achieve or earned low grades.

Learning and applying common terminology correctly is important to a candidate's ability to answer the question.

Applying modern value judgements to classical societies is inappropriate.

Candidates should read questions carefully before selecting one to ensure they choose the question that best suits their knowledge of a classical artwork or building.

When writing in response to a question on 'architectural features', it is recommended that candidates focus on features relating to design, or a combination of features relating to design and decoration, as candidates who focused on just decorative architectural features tended not to reach higher levels of achievement by comparison.

When writing in response to a question on 'subject matter', it is recommended that candidates focus on situating the subject matter in the context of the classical society without imposing modern value judgements. Many candidates appear not to understand the difference between a patriarchal and misogynistic society. To say that classical society is misogynistic is incorrect.

Many candidates confused stylistic features with narrative techniques and were not able to reach high grades of achievement. Stylistic features may include composition, pose, anatomy, drapery, movement, illusion of depth, perspective, use of space, use of colour, and shading, etc. Psychological tension and dominant figures are not stylistic features.

When writing in response to architectural design challenges, it is recommended that candidates clearly explain what challenges the architect / engineer faced and how they dealt with these challenges. Some buildings, such as the Parthenon, Pantheon, Pont Du Gard, and the Colosseum, are more appropriate for this type of question than others.

### Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- provided some understanding of a classical art work or building, usually by naming relevant features and describing them in a basic or straightforward manner
- struggled to address the second part of a question beyond making general claims or stating the obvious (e.g., Perseus [in reference to a classical fresco painting] was aided by the gods and this shows that the classical society believed gods were more powerful than humans)
- concentrated on providing rote-learned material that was not relevant to the question
- ignored the second part of the question
- focused on more than one classical art work or building where the selected question asked for one
- provided contradictory interpretations; for example, 'the view at the Colosseum was the same for everyone because of the tiered seating ... slaves went to the back, which means they could not see'
- wrote explanations that were repetitive.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- responded to the question to some degree and showed some knowledge and straightforward understanding

- provided enough specific and relevant evidence, though the evidence was not always well explained or linked back to their key idea
- focused on the historical / political / social / mythological context without linking this knowledge to the artwork.

Candidates whose work was assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- did not respond to the question (their response may have been correct but mostly irrelevant to the question)
- used the wrong artwork for the question
- wrote responses that were brief and too general, showing a lack of knowledge and understanding
- wrote responses that lacked relevant and enough evidence
- wrote responses that were mostly inaccurate.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- addressed both parts of the question
- provided detailed responses that showed depth of knowledge and understanding
- provided relevant and specific evidence from the artwork
- provided unbalanced responses (low Merit). For example, some evidence may not have been well explained or connected to the question, or lacked clarity and consistency
- provided balanced responses (high Merit) where evidence and explanations were consistently in depth.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- answered both parts of the question fully
  - showed perceptive knowledge and understanding (within the relevant classical context)
  - provided specific and relevant evidence from the artwork consistently
  - explained and linked evidence back to the question.
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# 91023: Demonstrate understanding of an important historical figure in the classical world

## Examinations

The examination required candidates to select and write paragraphs in response to one of four questions. To answer a question in this examination, candidates were expected to show understanding of a classical historical figure regarding the following assessment specifications:

- leadership
- power
- relationships
- significant event.

The questions required candidates to apply their understanding of a classical historical figure to a chosen question to demonstrate understanding of the figure's importance in the classical world. A perceptive response focused on providing detailed descriptions supported by primary-source evidence and explaining how these details, when situated in the classical context, reveal the importance of the figure in relation to the question.

## Observations

Common successful context choices included Julius Caesar, Nero, Augustus, and Alexander the Great. Leonidas, Publius Quinctilius Varus, Cleopatra, Pompey, Mark Antony, and Constantine were also successful contexts, but were less popular.

Candidates often struggled to address both parts of the question in their answers in a meaningful way, and this hindered their progress towards higher levels of achievement. Many candidates produced high-quality responses that addressed one part of the question comprehensively but often at the expense of the other part of the question. Candidates could improve answering both parts of the question with specific and detailed evidence and examples to answer the question fully.

Candidates are encouraged to integrate critique of sources into their response, as opposed to a separate and disconnected sentence within a paragraph. Similarly, attempts to integrate knowledge of cultural behaviours or motivations were more

effective when integrated into the answer in a manner that was relevant to the question.

When discussing the wider context, candidates should explicitly discuss its implications within the context of the question.

Candidates who used short introductions that directly answered the question and gave a brief interpretation of how they intended to respond to the question were generally more successful as they were focused on addressing the question, which helped them to avoid providing irrelevant information.

## Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- addressed one part of the question only or addressed the second part of the question insufficiently
- used evidence in a very general way. This included Greek or Latin words, minor use of quotation or attribution, or descriptions that could be inferred as being derived from primary sources
- focused on telling the story or making a narrative description in large parts, instead of consistently focusing on answering the question
- included irrelevant detail that did not address the question
- wrote in a very general way, using vague language that lacked enough detail and was unconvincing, inaccurate, superficial, or oversimplified in nature.

Candidates whose work was assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- wrote responses that did not answer the question or misinterpreted the question
- wrote overly brief responses or wrote too generically or superficially
- addressed the question in a vague and / or unconvincing manner and discussed events in very general terms, lacking specific details
- made inaccurate or oversimplified statements about classical society
- wrote irrelevant answers and typically did not use the key words from the questions to guide their answer
- used minimal evidence from primary sources or provided evidence that was irrelevant or incorrect

- wrote responses that had little relevant information, lacked specific details, or were inaccurate.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- addressed both parts of the question in a meaningful way, explicitly and substantively, either separately or in an integrated response
- provided specific and relevant primary source evidence consistently to support their explanation, often in the form of attributed quotations; sources were clearly introduced and their relevance as supporting evidence for the question was commented on
- structured responses effectively with key words from both parts of the question regularly linked to the response
- demonstrated depth by exploring a range of aspects relating to both parts of the question
- understood the historical figure and the historical context
- did not address both parts of the question fully, with one part of the question being a sentence or two at the end of paragraphs or only being addressed in a very general way.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- answered both parts of the question fully with a specific and substantive response to both parts of the question
- demonstrated insight into the motivations of the historical figure and applied the implications of this to their understanding of the question
- commented on the significance of cultural expectations or codes of behaviour that were relevant to the chosen question
- showed insight by situating the response in the wider context and discussing the implications of the wider context
- demonstrated understanding of the limitations of primary source evidence and applied the implications of this to their understanding of the question
- consistently drew upon well-chosen, specific, and relevant primary-source evidence in a way that enhanced the response

- applied appropriate structure to the response, using key words from the question to frame paragraphs.

## [Classical Studies subject page](#)

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